STANDARD FORM NO. 64

CONFIDENTIAL

ARA - Mr. Hyland

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

752

TO : ARA - Mr. Raine

DATE: June 23, 1954

FROM : DRA - Mr. Burgin

SUBJECT:

In response to your request of this morning I am transmitting a brief survey of unofficial reactions in Latin America to the Guatemalan uprising. We have received significant indications of public reactions from only the eleven countries covered in the survey. I am also attaching a statement on Latin American unofficial reactions to the Guatemalan problem in the period May 15 - June 18, covering the events between the Soviet orbit arms shipment to Guatemala and the uprising.

Attachments:

As stated above.

OIR/DRA:EHyman:acn

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June 23, 1954

Unofficial Reactions in Latin America to the Guatemalan Situation, June 18-22
(received in OIR to 3 p.m., June 23)

Argentina

Anti-US and pro-Guatemalan demonstrations have been reported in Buenos Aires. Comments in the controlled press (La Epoca and Democracia) have indicated sympathy for Guatemala. Democracia has implied that the "invasion" of Guatemala was sponsored by the United States and has compared the US attitude toward Guatemala with the "Braden Attack" on the Argentine revolution. This paper has also made heavy use of Agencia Latina dispatches (generally anti-US), has employed misleading headlines, and has called a pro-Guatemalan Communist demonstration "peaceful and spontaneous".

Brazil

The Guatemalan uprising apparently has increased the difficulty already experienced by predominantly anti-Communist and pro-US groups in accepting fully the US position regarding Guatemala. Among these groups there is indication of 1) some difficulty in reconciling US denial of arms to Guatemala with the fact that the exiles were allowed to arm and (2) some doubt concerning the validity of the term "popular uprising" as applied to the insurrectionary movement. To leftists and anti-US nationalists the uprising has provided heavy propaganda ammunition.

Chile

Nine out of ten Chileans, according to a Foreign Office official, hold the US responsible for the "invasion" from Honduras. While conservative El Mercurio expressed regret over the "invasion", the conservative press generally has stressed Communist influence in the Arbenz regime. A Radical Party organ (La Tercera de la Hora) condemned the "invasion" and sensational Noticias de Ultima Hora blamed it on the State Department. Communist and other leftist groups have seized the occasion to stage anti-US demonstrations. Reportedly the Radical, Socialist, and Communist Parties, the Popular Front, CUT (labor central) and other groups have declared their support for Guatemala and plan a popular demonstration for June 24.

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Colombia

Reaction to the Guatemalan situation reflects a sharp division between Liberal and Conservative segments of public opinion. The moderate and extremist Conservative press (representative of the governing group) has underscored Guatemalan ties with international Communism and advocated action by the OAS, in some cases urging Colombian initiative in securing such action. The Liberal press has viewed the uprising as an "incredible disregard of the non-intervention principle", and has charged US reversion to "dollar diplomacy" and "big stick" practices. .

Cuba

The conservative and moderate press has reacted variously to the Guatemalan uprising: Diario de la Marina defended Castillo Armas' attempt to save the country from Communism; Excelsior saw the uprising as the repudiation of Communists and Arbenz by the Guatemalan people; El Mundo commented that armed intervention by any state against another could not be tolerated while legal recourses were open. The anti-US, pro-Guatemala Tiempo said US shipment of arms to Honduras and Nicaragua was actual intervention, and implied that the United Fruit Company was the main issue. A university students' demonstration in favor of Guatemala was to have been held on June 21; and "hundreds" of young men reportedly have applied at the Guatemalan Embassy in Habana to enlist in the Guatemalan army.

Honduras

The Honduran press has been divided on the issue of the Guatemalan uprising. Reformist El Día and Prensa Libre and nationalist La Epoca (all pro-government) have been friendly to the anti-Communists, while radical El Cronista and liberal El Pueblo (opposition papers) have supported the Guatemalan Government. The Honduran Federation of University Students passed a resolution expressing full sympathy with the Guatemalan Government and people and demanded the expulsion from Honduras of Col. Castillo Armas. The students planned to publicize their views in a demonstration in the capital.

Mexico

Initial public reaction reported in and reflected by the press has indicated strong, but by no means unanimous, support for the Guatemalan Government in right-wing circles. Of three early editorials, however, two were neutral in tone and urged "serenity" on the public.

Conservative Excelsior was squarely anti-Arbenz, unequivocally blaming Communist intervention for the outbreak of violence.

Ultra-nationalist Sinarquistas, student organizations, Communists and fellow travellers made the most of the Guatemalan uprising to prove aggressive "US imperialism".

Panama

Press reactions have suggested concern over the Guatemalan uprising and hope that a formula will be found by the OAS to put an end to the conflict. One source commented that the principle of non-intervention was over-emphasized and may become a boomerang in the light of Communist influence in Guatemala.

The Guatemalan representative at the travel congress presented Guatemala's position to a public meeting and was frequently interrupted by applause from a large student delegation.

Peru

Reaction to the uprising in Guatemala is unreported except in the case of exiled Apristas. Apristas in Chile, who adopted an anti-US line in mid-1952, reportedly have expressed solidarity with the Guatemalan government against "imperialistic voraciousness".

In Montevideo, Aprista leader Haya de la Torre, who originally recommended immediate OAS consideration of the incident, reportedly has pledged absolute solidarity with Guatemala and ridiculed charges of Communist infiltration.

Uruguay

The US appears to have lost further popular sympathy because of alleged complicity in the "invasion". On June 21 the Chamber of Deputies passed a Socialist-sponsored resolution of solidarity with Guatemala. The Communist and extreme nationalist press has openly charged that US-armed Honduras and Nicaragua are promoting aggression against Guatemala, and public demonstrations have been staged against the US. Moderate El Pais assumes that the "invasion" was probably abetted by US interests, and the conservative press indicates concern that the "invasion" will complicate the Communist problem in the Caribbean and increase its gravity.

Venezuela

Only the uninfluential anti-US leftist and pro-Communist press has revealed its attitude toward the uprising in Guatemala. These papers, have alleged the implication of Honduras and the tacit approval or complicity of the United States Government.

June 23, 1954

Unofficial Latin American Reactions to the Guatemalan Situation
(May 15-June 18, 1954)

Argentina

Editorial and other comment in the government-controlled press was sympathetic to Guatemala. On June 16 the controlled press broke a thirteen-day period of editorial silence on the Guatemalan situation with an attack on the US in semi-official Democracia. Only the uninfluential English language papers published editorials supporting the US position.

Opposition political parties (Radical Civic Union and Socialist) made public statements of support for Guatemala.

Bolivia

Expressions of public opinion concerning the Guatemalan situation were confined largely to leftist elements. These elements, including student and labor groups within the Administration party, firmly supported Guatemala. Editorial comment in the non-leftist press was sparse and basically noncommital with regard to issues. This reflected an awareness of the temper of labor and student opinion as well as the acute sensitivity of Bolivians to "intervention".

Brazil

Public opinion in the important city of São Paulo was predominantly anti-US on the Guatemalan issue. The tendency there -- and there is no reason to believe that this tendency did not prevail throughout the country -- was to discount the menace of Communism in Guatemala and the serious implications of the country's receipt of Iron Curtain arms and to interpret the situation as involving principally an issue between the United Fruit Company and a sovereign state attempting to work out its own political and economic destiny.

The press gave full play to news concerning Guatemalan developments but editorial comment was relatively sparse. Government-oriented newspapers avoided taking a position. Leftist papers and columnists viewed the issue in terms of "economic imperialism" as did the prominent literary figure, Tristao de Athayde, a prominent "liberal Catholic" layman. Conservative and moderate newspapers in Rio and São Paulo indicated perplexity

concerning the issues, and although most favored inter-American consultation they found it difficult to abandon the suspicion that the United Fruit Company was somehow involved. The most solid support for the US position came from the Chateaubriand newspaper chain. Editorials in these papers, at least in Rio, closely reflected the opinion of their owner, Senator Assis Chateaubriand, who in two Senate speeches fully endorsed the US stand and advocated economic sanctions against Guatemala if necessary to eliminate the Communist danger.

Chile

Leading conservative papers such as El Mercurio and El Diario Ilustrado supported the US position while nationalist, leftist publications carried comment sympathetic to Guatemala. Leftists groups of various types, including students and Peruvian Apristas in exile in Chile, also vociferously supported Guatemala.

Colombia

The shipment of Iron Curtain arms to Guatemala and subsequent developments up to June 18 received unusually extensive treatment in the Colombian press. In general, comment was critical of Guatemala and favored inter-American consultation and the US position. The Conservative papers expressed their pro-US and anti-Communist attitude in especially strong terms. Influential Liberal papers were less consistently favorable to the US position and continued to display some sympathy for Guatemala. However, they censured Guatemala for obtaining Soviet bloc arms and indicated their support for inter-American consultation on the Guatemalan situation.

Costa Rica

Conservative papers criticized Guatemala for permitting Communism to grow and for suspending constitutional guarantees. They also favored inter-American consultation.

Cuba

Leading papers, in varying degrees of intensity, expressed the opinion that the arms shipment was a manifestation of international Communism and a threat to the peace and security of the hemisphere and that the situation called for inter-American action. Some sympathy for Guatemala was displayed, however, and there was a tendency to distinguish between Guatemala's legitimate aspirations and its dangerous connections

with Communism as revealed by the arms shipment. In the case of the influential magazine Bohemia, sympathy for the former appeared to outweigh concern over the latter. Generally pro-Guatemalan Tiempo, however, pointed out that Guatemala's romance with Communism was weakening the course of that country's truly nationalist movement.

Dominican Republic

The press in this country is strictly government-controlled and hence echoes official opinion which on this issue was favorable to the US position.

Ecuador

Ecuadoran papers, concentrating on elections and the latest flare-up with Peru, gave little attention to the Guatemalan situation. The few comments available indicated concern over the arms shipment and urged action to prevent the spread of Communism in the Americas. The leading independent paper regretted, however, that the cooperation of "several dictators who rule some of our nations" had to be sought in the struggle against Communism. The Chief of the Liberal Party, Eduardo Salazar Gomez, called for strong action against Guatemala.

El Salvador

Press and public opinion showed some realization of the growing dangers of Communist penetration in Guatemala but, at the same time, reflected the hope that somehow El Salvador could remain outside the main current of activity concerned with these dangers. Although government-owned Tribuna Libre pointed up the Communist menace, editorials in other papers tended to stress the neutrality of Salvador's position.

Haiti

Local press gave wide coverage to the shipment of arms to Guatemala and editorial comment revealed awareness of the implications of this development for the hemisphere. Some writers expressed the opinion that sanctions should be imposed on Guatemala under the Rio Treaty. Several commentators, however, brought in the United Fruit Company issue and one said that the US unwittingly promotes colonialism in tolerating Wall Street exploitation of Central American countries.

Honduras

Press comments indicated concern over the arms shipment and its

possible affect on Honduras' security.

Mexico

Shortly after the shipment of arms to Guatemala the Mexican public began to receive adequate news coverage of the Guatemalan situation for the first time in several months. Moreover, the almost complete editorial silence on Guatemala was broken by three editorials and two contributed columns in the leading conservative papers. These were followed by many more.

About half of the non-Communist comment was moderately favorable to the US position, but another third merely exhibited genuine and profound concern over the situation without indicating what action, if any, they favored. Two regular international columnists were either skeptical or sarcastic about the fears of the US and of Guatemala's neighbors. In so far as the press can be taken as an index of public opinion it must be concluded that while the Mexican people were jolted out of their apathy toward Communism in Guatemala, they were not yet prepared to support or participate in joint action against the Communist threat.

Leftist individuals and groups (Ex-President Cárdenas and students) publicly expressed their solidarity with Guatemala and Communists and pro-Communists violently denounced "US imperialism".

Nicaragua

Press comments in this country favored the US position on Guatemala.

Panama

Leading papers indicated concern over the arms shipment and some favored inter-American consultation to deal with the problem. However, important Panamá América made some sarcastic remarks about the US sending arms to "democratic" Somoza and influential La Estrella de Panamá expressed little hope for the success of a Foreign Ministers' meeting so long as the US took such little interest in Latin America as evidenced by its treatment of Panama.

Paraguay

The few Paraguayans normally interested in international matters were too engrossed in the local political situation to take an active interest in the Guatemalan situation. The only editorials on the subject came from Gerardo Halley Mora who strongly endorsed the US position.

Peru

The Peruvian press, preoccupied with developments in neighboring Ecuador and Bolivia, gave little attention to Guatemala except by carrying US news agency reports on the subject. Only conservative La Prensa commented on the situation. It concluded that the Communist movement was intervening directly in hemisphere affairs and that the American governments must take effective counteraction.

Uruguay

Press treatment of the Guatemalan situation tended to follow party lines. Nationalist (Herrerista), Socialist and Communist papers supported Guatemala and denounced the US. Independent Nationalist, Independent Colorado, and the Battle Pacheco (Government) Colorado press strongly supported the US position. Accion, organ of the Battle Berres faction of the Colorado Party, was at first critical of the US but it eventually came out in support of the US position. Leftist Marcha consistently supported Guatemala and condemned the US. Catholic El Bien Público exhibited concern over the Communist menace in Guatemala.

With the exception of El Dia (Government Colorado Party), all papers supporting the US position on the seriousness of the Communist threat to the hemisphere posed by Communist infiltration of Guatemala, made it clear that they were not defending the United Fruit Company and some expressed sympathy for Guatemala in its controversy with UFCO.

Venezuela

The press reported fully the events connected with the shipment of arms to Guatemala but did not evince deep interest in the Guatemalan situation and carried no significant editorial comment. Perhaps it was waiting for the Government to announce its position.

While headline treatment of news on Guatemala indicated widespread admiration for Guatemala in early June, headline treatment of the news by the middle of June tended to favor the US. In editorial comment conservative papers generally displayed strong pro-US and anti-Communist positions. Nationalist papers denounced the US for intervening in Guatemala. Influential El Universal gave space in its columns to both pro-US and pro-Guatemalan commentators.